



Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony - February 12, 2016  
CHRO

Good evening, Chairman Walker, Chairman Bye and Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Brian Anderson. I am a legislative representative for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 34,000 public and private employees who include many of the CHRO staffers.

Our union urges you to leave CHRO (the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities) as a stand alone agency. CHRO's role is unique. It serves as a law enforcement agency, which stands up for the rights of members of protected classes. Members of protected classes are people who have an inherent trait that has historically led to discrimination against them: women, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, the elderly, disabled folks and religious minorities. CHRO also advocates for those who cannot hire private attorneys to fight discrimination and rely on the state to help fight for their rights.

Who would investigate, in a manner that appears fair and impartial, a complaint against someone in the management of the agency that would now oversee CHRO? It is vital for CHRO to stand alone so that it is apparent to members of the public that its decisions will be fair and free from bias or interference. This is somewhat similar to the way Connecticut has wisely set up the state auditor. Because the state auditor is an independent agency, the public knows that it is free from executive interference, as opposed to putting under OPM, the comptroller or the state treasurer's office

It is also our understanding that consolidating CHRO into another agency jeopardizes \$1.7 million in federal funds. Please leave CHRO as an independent agency and please fully fund its budget. CHRO does a lot with a very small staff.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions.